

# HouseCalls

Winter  
Woes

**Cold vs.  
Flu**

*Is it a sore  
throat, or  
more?*

**Applauding  
excellence  
at GRMC**

Heart  
Healthy!

**GRMC hosts  
GO RED  
for Women**

Inside  
GRMC  
Rehab  
Center



**GADSDEN REGIONAL**  
medical center





Doug DeGraaf  
Chief Executive Officer

**W**elcome to the winter issue of *House Calls*. The start of 2009 finds Gadsden Regional Medical Center enjoying the benefits Centennial Tower allows us to provide for our patients and their families.

GRMC is fortunate to have completed its four-story tower at this time, when economic challenges are leading many healthcare facilities to scale down, postpone or abandon planned expansions, and in some cases to cut services offered to their communities. You may well have seen some of the headlines signaling the troubles of some healthcare facilities. Changes in

reimbursements from Medicaid and other insurers have affected all healthcare providers and will continue to do so. Everyone is waiting to see what the new President's administration may mean for healthcare.

During an economic climate such as this, Gadsden Regional must be a good steward of its resources, just as every organization — and every individual — must be. But our top priority remains being a good steward of your healthcare. At a time when many healthcare facilities are cutting back on staff, Gadsden Regional is hiring in key positions to continue to provide the best in care to our community.

— Doug DeGraaf

## APPLAUDING EXCELLENCE AT GRMC

Gadsden Regional Medical Center is blessed with excellent employees, and was pleased recently to recognize three members of the staff whose contributions and dedication have won them the respect of their colleagues, and employee of the year honors for 2008.

Scrub Tech **Tim Hyatt** was selected Employee of the Year. He has impressed co-workers with his kind demeanor and motivational skills. "Tim never sees anything as not being part of his job. He has a heart for service and it shows," according to his nomination. Clinical Manager of the Year **Rebecca Smith** is director of the 8th Floor. She is noted for her fairness and consistency in leadership. She has been an integral part of the Community Cares AIDET and Hourly Rounding training program's success. "Rebecca is considered by many to be the ultimate Team Player," her nomination



GRMC CEO Doug DeGraaf (third from left) congratulated (from left) Rebecca Smith, Tim Hyatt and Gale Sanders at a reception in their honor recently.

reads. Non-Clinical Manager of the Year **Gale Sanders** is Director of Human Resources. Gale is known as a respectful, thoughtful and methodical leader, who always has time to help others. "Gale always handles stress with grace and dignity," according to her nomination. "Gale is very tuned in to current policies ... and always represents the hospital in the best possible light."

# Cold vs. Flu



Jason Ayres, M.D.  
is a family practice  
physician at Southside  
Medical Clinic.

Colds and the flu most often occur around the same time of year and both have unpleasant symptoms, so it can be hard to differentiate between the two. However, it is important to distinguish the cause of your symptoms to determine the best course of treatment. The most common symptoms of a cold are within the respiratory system and include a stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, cough or chest discomfort. Treatment for these symptoms is available through over the counter medication designed to target various symptoms of a cold.

*The best way to treat a cold is to drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, use over the counter drugs and monitor for symptoms that last longer than five to seven days.* If symptoms persist, they may have developed into an advanced respiratory illness in the form of an ear infection, sinus infection or bronchitis. In the event that a cold advances into a more serious condition, seek treatment from your doctor. While a cold generally attacks the respiratory system, the flu can impact the entire body and influence multiple systems. Symptoms of the flu often include a fever between 100 F and 104 F, headache, body aches, fatigue, exhaustion and nausea. If it is mild, the flu can be treated with rest, fluids and over the counter medication targeting the symptoms. If the flu is more severe, a doctor may prescribe antiviral medication. Over the counter and prescription treatments can help treat the symptoms:

As with a cold, if symptoms persist longer than three to five days, or become increasingly severe, see a physician about the possibility of the flu developing into a more severe illness. The flu can develop into bronchitis or pneumonia, particularly

in patients who are older or have compromised immune systems, and may require more intense medical treatment or even hospitalization.

*The best way to avoid contracting the flu is to get an annual flu shot.* The virus changes every year, so see your doctor each flu season to get immunized to help minimize or avoid these symptoms altogether. Unfortunately, there is no immunization against the cold, but washing your hands frequently, not touching your face with your hands, and avoiding contact with people who have a cold can be a strong defense. Both the cold and flu can make you feel miserable and cause you to miss school or work. With some extra hand-washing and a flu shot, you can improve your chances of avoiding both this season.



## Handwashing 101

To get rid of germs and bacteria, wet hands, apply soap and rub hands together for at least 20 seconds, then rinse thoroughly with warm water. Dry and use the paper towel to turn off water and open the bathroom door, then discard.

To use hand sanitizer, select a product that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, rub on hands and air dry.

# Get ready to GO RED



**G**adsden Regional Medical Center is inviting everyone to GO RED February. 17, with the 5<sup>th</sup> annual GO RED for Women event. There will be a lot of fun, including a fashion show, featuring Gadsden-area models dressed to impress in finery provided by local merchants, goodie bags, event T-shirts and artwork for purchase.

The fun will have a serious focus – sharing information about heart health and other issues for women. Dr. George Robinson, a GRMC Cardio/Thoracic Surgeon, will be guest speaker and Shari Moyer, wife of GRMC employee Michael Moyer, will share the story of her family's recent experience after Michael suffered a heart attack in December.

Wear your red and come join us as we GO RED for Women, 6-8 p.m, Feb. 17 at Convention Hall. For ticket information, call Greg Dial at 494-4895.



*Just like last year, Go Red for Women will feature a Fashion show with local volunteer models.*

## MAKING THE GRADE IN CARDIAC CARE

*Cardiac care is a critical need in northeast Alabama, and one Gadsden Regional Medical Center is working hard to address. According to HealthGrades, the national healthcare ratings company, GRMC is meeting that need and meeting it well.*

*HealthGrades recognized Gadsden Regional with its 2009 Clinical Excellence award for Cardiac Surgery and ranked Gadsden Regional in the Top 10 percent nationally for clinical outcomes in cardiac surgery.*

*Gadsden Regional ranked among the top 5 hospitals in Alabama for both overall cardiac care and cardiac surgery.*

*"We're honored, for the fourth year in a row, to receive an award from HealthGrades," GRMC CEO Doug DeGraaf said. "This award comes as a result of our continued commitment to providing the finest cardiac care for our patients.*

*It's a commitment from our facility, our staff and our physicians, and we believe it is evident from the hardware – the leading edge technology we've made available – to the hands-on care our doctors, nurses and technicians provide "We demonstrate daily, and we believe HealthGrades has confirmed, that for your heart, Gadsden Regional Medical Center is your hospital."*

# Critical Heart 411:

# Dial 911

Of all the information you may hear about heart health, this could be the most crucial:

*If you suspect you or someone else is having a heart attack, call for emergency help immediately.*

There are medicines and treatments available today that can help heart attack and stroke victims more than those of the past, but for them to be effective, timing is everything. Clot-busting drugs can stop some heart attacks and strokes in progress, reducing disability and saving lives. But for these drugs to be most effective, the condition has to be diagnosed and the drugs have to be given soon after symptoms first appear.

Calling 911 is almost always the fastest way to get the kind of treatment that can save a life. Emergency medical services staff can start treatment as soon as they arrive, which can often be as much as an hour sooner than you can get someone into a vehicle, take them to a hospital and get them inside. EMS staff are trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. EMS staff can relay information about the patient's condition en route to the hospital, which can speed treatment when the patient arrives.

The best bet is calling EMS for rapid transport, but if you don't have access to EMS, have someone drive you to the hospital immediately. If you're experiencing any symptoms of a heart attack, don't try to drive yourself to the hospital unless it is the only option.



## **Heart attack warning signs**

Heart attacks can be sudden and intense – Fred Sanford's "big one," or the kind of attack you might see in the movies. But most heart attacks aren't like that; they start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are some of the more subtle signs that could signal a heart attack:

**Chest Discomfort** *Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.*

## **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**

*Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.*

## **Shortness of breath** *With or without chest discomfort*

**Other signs** *May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness*

For men and women, the most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. Women are more likely than men to experience some of the other symptoms — particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

*Source: American Heart Association*

## Facility serves people of all ages, facing various c



*Physical therapist Barb Coker works with a patient to rehabilitate the woman's knee after knee replacement surgery.*

**M**ention physical therapy, and some people think only of the injured athlete working to get back into the game. Some others may think of a person who has suffered a stroke, trying to regain impaired function, or perhaps someone who's had orthopedic surgery.

People might not think of an infant, who suffered a stretched nerve at birth, a young person who was physically able until a

traumatic brain injury left them with neurological and physical challenges or someone afflicted with cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis. But all these people – and many more with other conditions or injuries – are candidates for physical therapy, according to therapists at The Rehab Center.

Physical therapists are health care professionals who diagnose and manage people of all ages with medical or health-related problems that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

Barb Coker is a physical therapist at The Rehab Center, Gadsden Regional Medical Center's facility for out-patient physical therapy. The Rehab Center provides physical, occupational and speech therapy. Coker said this can be a great benefit to the people they serve, because many of them need two or even all three therapies. The Rehab Center allows them to get those therapies at one location.

### *Specialized training*

Coker holds a master's in physical therapy, a master's in exercise physiology and is a board-certified exercise specialist. Last summer, she completed training to become a certified Orthopedic Specialist. She is the only physical therapist in the county to hold that certification, and one of only 38 in the state certified as an orthopedic clinical specialist.

"It means that I'm trying to provide the methods given a patient's needs," Coker said. "It's about treating orthopedic patients – those who have skeletal, muscular and joint conditions."

"We're sort of like the mechanics for the body. It means sometimes physical therapists are working with someone after a knee or hip replacement surgery. But often, Coker said, physical therapists work with a patient in the early stages of a problem to strengthen joints so that further injury or surgery can be avoided."

### *Preventative work*

"If we could see a person when they have a problem, sometimes we can retard the problem or prevent it from becoming a bio-mechanical problem," Coker said. Physical weakness, flexibility or joint mobility can often be addressed through therapy.

And when surgery is needed, getting the patient to the point where they can walk is the key to optimizing the recovery from an orthopedic surgery.

Coker said the specialized training she sought was the key to that therapy. "I wanted to hone and develop the skills to help patients with orthopedic problems, both post-operative and preventative."

At The Rehab Center, there is equal communication and therapy provided for patients of all ages, facing various challenges.

"I feel we do a good job of putting hands-on care while they are here," Coker said. "We give our patients the time that is needed."

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# Did you know?

*‘Tis the season for scratchy throats and cold chills. When bundling up with a hot tea and a blanket don’t chase that sore throat away, you may wonder if you have a cold, strep throat or even tonsillitis.*

*A sore throat can be the first sign of a cold, particularly if it’s gone in a few days or replaced with other symptoms.*

*Over-the-counter medications and lots of rest should send that cold on its way. More severe or long-lasting pain, a red throat and a fever may mean strep throat or tonsillitis, which can be treated with antibiotics.*

*Your doctor can pinpoint the problem in his office with a simple test. It’s important to diagnose strep throat or tonsillitis because either could develop into a more serious illness.*



## WE NEED YOU TO BE A HOSPICE VOLUNTEER!

There are countless ways to volunteer  
and countless reasons to volunteer:

- Visiting
- Letter-writing
- Errands
- Caregiver walks
- Phone calls
- Monthly meetings
- Speaking about Hospice
- Sitting with patient
- Listening to patient
- Meal Preparation
- House-keeping
- Office filing
- Gift preparation
- Shopping
- Relieving family members
- And most importantly:  
Giving, caring and helping!

*Patients and families need you!  
Be part of a good feeling!  
Call today: 538-7460*



# GRMC Cancer Center

*HONORED FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE*

A diagnosis of cancer is a scary thing for any patient. Being treated for cancer can be a trying experience not only for the patient but for his or her family too.

Gadsden Regional Medical Center Cancer Center's staff has worked hard to make treatment less of a trial for its patients and their families, by dispensing not only advanced health care, but a good portion of just plain care for the people who enter its doors.

And the effort has received notice on a national level.

GRMC Cancer Center earned *Hematology & Oncology News & Issues'* 2008 HOPE Award for customer service.

The Cancer Center, which opened in 1987, is the only cancer treatment center in Etowah County. It provides inpatient and outpatient radiation therapy, chemotherapy and MRI services.

But what led to the center's selection as the 2008 Hope Award winner among small practices is the dedication of its staff to providing that care in the most comfortable setting possible.

The staff makes practical efforts. If a patient has financial or physical challenges that make it difficult to



*The waiting areas and treatment rooms at the Cancer Center are designed to be comfortable and comforting.*

come to the center for treatment, efforts are made to schedule treatments when that patient may have other appointments in the area, or otherwise finding help with the costs for patients.

Concern for the patients is built-in at the facility, where atmospheric lighting and screens with pleasant pictures make the treatment rooms more comforting for patients who undergo treatments there.

[www.gadsdenregional.com](http://www.gadsdenregional.com)



**GADSDEN REGIONAL**  
medical center

Gadsden Regional Medical Center  
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Gadsden, AL 35903

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## HouseCalls

House Calls is published as a community service of Gadsden Regional Medical Center. There is no fee to subscribe.

The information contained in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have medical concerns, please consult your healthcare provider.

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